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1925
THE GIFT OF
The Heirs of
George C. Dempsey

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JOE ANDERSON

AND

OLD JIM BAYLEY.

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JOE ANDERSON, &c.

CHAPTER I.

"**W**HY is not father more kind?" said George: "lately he scolds more than ever, and doesn't talk to me as he used to; why is it, mother?" George's mother sighed.

She was an honest and good woman, and her heart had been sorely tried by the conduct of her husband. When she was married, he was a sober and industrious man; but he had fallen into bad habits, was less diligent than before, and had at last become fretful and unkind.

"George," said she, "may *you* at least be kind to your poor mother: may you grow up and be a help and a comfort to her. She watched over you in your cradle. She took care of you as you grew older, and now she looks to you for support. George, my son, remember your mother, and never be tempted to do evil." George covered his face to conceal his tears.

The next morning was to be the first morning of a new year, and George had long looked forward to it with joy. But when he went up to his little room, new thoughts came into his mind. He closed his eyes, but slept not. He thought of his mother's words. He thought of her sorrow. He thought of his own duty, and he thought of his father; but that thought was too much for him, and he wept bitterly.

The evening was still. It was clear and frosty. Now and then he could hear a passing footstep, and then all was again silent. George asked help from above; he prayed long and earnestly, and his feelings were quieted, and he fell into a calm sleep.

The next morning, George remained upon his knees longer than common, and when he arose, he felt more cheerful. He crept slowly down the stairs, that they might not hear him, till he could wish them "a happy new year." He had saved a little money now and then for many months; and wishing to show his regard for his mother, he placed in her hand a small hymn-book—the gift was a trifle, but it showed his feelings, and that was enough. His mother's eyes brightened, and her face was raised upward, while her hand was laid upon her son's head, and her lips moved as if in prayer.

That morning, George's father was very cross. Every thing seemed to go wrong. In doors it was too warm—and out of doors it was too cold. The chairs were uneasy, and the breakfast was not cooked right. His wife was too dull, and the neighbors were too merry. In truth, the night before he had been drinking. His old comrades had invited him into the shop at the corner, and it wouldn't have looked civil to refuse; so he just stepped in and remained longer than he had intended, and this morning his tongue was parched, his flesh was fevered, and he was, in fact, precisely what the night before had made him.

Still he loved George, for even when he spoke in anger, his son always remained so gentle, and attended so promptly to what he was told to do, that the father could not but feel a great affection for him. He loved him; but this morning he hardly dared give him his blessing, for he felt in his heart, that the blessing of such a parent must be a mockery—and he was ashamed to give it.

The day passed slowly over. Before night there was a slight fall of snow. Twilight came on, and the family were seated by a cheerful fire. That evening the father remained at home, and the mother was at a side table busy with her needle. George looked first at her, and then into the fire, and at last into the face of his father. He seemed anxious—he was uneasy—he moved in his seat—till at last he rose up, and drew near to his father.

"Father, you have given me no New Year's Gift to-day as you used to."

"No, George, I have had little to give; what would you have liked, my son?"

George looked up, and replied, "Something to show that you love me."

"As for my loving you, George, you know that already; but name, my son, what you would have, and if it be in my power, it shall be given."

"I do believe that you love me, father, and I want you to show it by one promise. It is a promise that will make mother and me, both, happier than any present."

The father looked at his son.

"Yes," said George, "and I will love you, and mother will, if you will but give it, and keep it one year: promise to be as you used to, and drink no more till next New Year's day. Do promise that, father."

The father rose up and went to the window. He raised the curtain, and looked out. The stars were just gleaming through the edges of the clouds; but he did not see them. With his rough hand he wiped the tears from his eyes. The voice of his child was in his ears. The thought of his earlier days came before him. His wife, all—all—lived in his mind. His heart was heavy within him, and he struggled with his own spirit. His leaden eye was lit up, and his blue lips trembled. He came back to the fire and took the hand of his son.

"My son, I promise that nothing shall induce me to drink for one year. I promise it by my love to you and your mother, and I thank you, George, for asking me not to do as I have done."

After this he sat down, and talked with his wife of his late habits; he told her that many times he had felt sorry, and ashamed, and wished to become better, but had not been so determined as he should have been. He talked over of their former comfort, and took George between his knees, as he tried to impress upon his mind, the unhappy feelings that always work like a sting in the heart of the bad.

Never through her whole life will that mother forget that night. She felt very confident her husband would keep his promise, and she thought that they might be again as happy as they used to be. She thought that he

would again be a kind husband to her, and a faithful father to George. Words can hardly tell how much more pleasantly she felt, and her son certainly went to his own room that night with a calmer mind; and when he knelt in prayer, he thanked Him who had put it into his heart what to do. The Lord heareth prayer and answereth it.

CHAPTER II.

About 9 the next morning, old Jim Bayley rapped at the door. He was slovenly dressed, and his tangled hair fell over his eyes from beneath a slouched hat. His face was flushed, and his gait was not a little stooping—which had been brought on by a habit he had long been in, of what he termed “moderate drinking.” He had lately become rather intimate with the father of George, and had called for him as usual to go to their day’s work. The morning was pleasant, and they walked down the street together.

“Rather hard times, these,” said Jim.

Joe made no reply.

“Rather hard times, I say, and winter setting in too. The fact is, work is not so plenty as it used to be, and these rich gentry are forever grinding us, as if the poor hadn’t rights like other folks!”

Joe commenced whistling a low tune, for he felt that men are exceedingly apt to blame others, for what is no one’s fault but their own. Poor Jim Bayley liked the bar-room, and the effects of it had poisoned his heart. He had broken down his constitution. He was lazy and ragged, and any one who wanted work done, would wait a day any time, rather than employ him. His face looked haggard, his appetite was gone, and he was tired almost of life. He had so long been in the habit of exciting himself with drink, that he now felt badly without it, so that it

had for a long time been his custom, to take his glass more regularly, than to take his meals. He had a wife; but she had been so tormented by her husband's conduct, that she too was falling into his ways, and you might have seen by her dress, and the look of her rooms, she was fast going, and there would soon be trouble. One window was filled up with an old hat, and another was still open to the wind. Her table was broken, and had been roughly mended with twine. They had three children. The youngest was a babe left to crawl upon the floor, and the oldest, a boy, was very profane, and had already begun to be a pest to the neighbors. Jim then was a discontented man; he had brought these evils upon himself, and he was glad of any excuse to vent his spleen upon those who lived better and happier lives.

Jim Bayley and Joe soon reached their place of work; and one might have easily told which was to do the most labor, and spend the happiest day.

Joe Anderson remembered his promise—he thought of his son and his wife, and he was determined not to disappoint them. That day he had little difficulty in finding work. True, he could not get so much the first day, as if he had always been sober and industrious; but he got something to do, and he was determined to work if it were for ever so little. For he knew he could regain his character, and that was the wish of his heart. He was surprised to find the morning so soon gone, and when he returned home at noon, he did it with more satisfaction, than he had done for many a day. As he passed the old grocery shop, he went in to purchase something. Old faces were there, but he merely nodded. The articles were soon put up, and Joe laid his money upon the counter. But in looking at the drawer, the man said he couldn't make the change, and asked if he would'nt take it in a glass.

"I will take the money," said Joe.

The man was a little surprised at his manner, and after fumbling over the drawer, soon found what was wanted. Joe had been answered in this way before, and he knew the trick too well. The old knave at the-bar winked at

the companions of Joe, and gave a significant cough—and as he passed the door, one gave a slight twitch at his coat, but he did not mind it, and soon reached home.

There George and his mother were ready to meet him, and never did he feel happier than on that day. They partook of their humble fare—and talked again about old times. His son had got a reward at school, and he spoke of it to his father, and his father felt proud of his boy. During the afternoon he worked still more cheerfully than in the morning, and things looked brighter to him. That evening he spent at home. It was the first evening after his promise, and he felt even more determined to persevere in his resolution. George's reward at school had been a book, and that evening he read it aloud. It was a touching story, and moved the hearts of them all. It was of a young girl who lived amid great temptation—and yet by the Sabbath school, and the care of kind teachers, became a good woman, and rescued many children from crime. It was a story that made them think of one or two of the neighbors' children, and made them feel how much should be done to preserve them amid such trials. There was Emily Wild-one, who lived at the corner; she was very rude, and a stranger might blame her sadly—but then her father was dead, her mother was thoughtless, and her sisters were both abandoned creatures. How then in truth could she be expected to be good, if left so? Then there was Nancy Doolittle, who lived opposite: her mother was sick—her father at sea—and those who lived in the next door were always tempting her to do evil. O, thought George, when I am older, I will try to do good. Whenever I see others left in such places, I always wish I could help them. He expressed his feelings to his father, who told him to continue to be a good boy, and when he was older he might do a great deal:—"Yes, be then what you are now," said he, "and you may add to the comfort of many a neighbor."

George looked at his book.

That night was a pleasant one for all; George's room never seemed so comfortable, and his parents were never more kind.

The next morning when Jim Bayley called, Joe had been gone more than an hour. Jim muttered something between his teeth, and went shuffling along down the street. Work went on as usual. With Jim times were dull—but with Joe, things were growing better..

That day Joe left his old grocer, and went to one who did not sell spirits. He found that the shop looked neater, that there were no loungers—no smoking—no oaths. The articles purchased seemed of rather a better quality, and given with more liberal measure.

As he went towards home he was obliged to pass Jim's house. The child had crawled to the edge of the door, and the boy was snatching from it a crust of bread. The mother sat on a stool, with an old chip basket by her side, from which she was picking some fuel for her fire.

Joe drew a deep sigh, and passed on.

When he reached home all was happy as before.— George was busy fixing a kite, and his father took hold and helped him.

CHAPTER III.

On Sunday morning George and his parents went to church; and in the afternoon, they all went to the Sabbath school, which George had for some time attended, and to which he now felt strongly attached. Several persons who loved the poor, and wished to do them good, had opened a church for the young, and there was something in its services peculiarly touching. Smiling faces were gathered around, and the hearts of childhood beat gladly together. It was a place of much joy to those who met there, for their affections had been called forth, and they found those there whom they could love. Young, happy creatures! He must have little feeling, who could have looked on them without emotion—and have heard their sweet voices joining in the hymn, and responding to the simple

prayers, and then have seen them lean over to listen to the word of God, and the advice of teachers. Here it was that George had received most of his religious principles—indeed all except those which his faithful mother had early implanted in his mind, and here it was he had first prayed for his father's repentance. He loved that school. He loved that church—and next to his parents he loved those kind friends who had done him such good. That afternoon was a happy one for those there. Never did scholars sit down with holier joy, and never did parents feel more grateful. To the teachers all looked as usual. They did not know the feelings of those three. But God knew, and he sent down his richest blessing.

God seeth the good and loveth them.

That very afternoon, while the heart of Joe Anderson was waking up to a more spiritual life, poor old Jim Bayley was persuaded to go with his wife to hear one, who, for a small sum of money, tried to blunt the conscience, and shut up the eyes of the soul from the coming judgment. The lecturer was very earnest. He told them they were mere animals, who, when they died, would rot in the grave and perish forever.

Old Jim seemed much pleased with this. He had frequently been troubled at the thought of a future life—for something within told him he was guilty; but he now hoped he should be able to shake away that feeling, so he looked into his wife's face and smiled.

"I wish *I* could think as *he* does," said his wife; "but I came near dying once, and I felt then that I had a soul, and I fear so now."

"I wish you would hold your tongue," said Jim.

That night George read the story of Joseph and his brethren aloud to his parents, by their warm fireside, while Jim Bayley was fretting and scolding in his cold, cheerless dwelling, and ended by beating his wife and pulling his son's hair.

The next day was very cold, and as Jim went along, he thought of his poverty, he thought of all that made him miserable at home, and he made up his mind to care noth-

ing for what he did. The old man said last night there was no future world—no soul—no God. Why then not steal? To work is hard; but I can steal very easy, and if I'm quite cunning, no one will know it. Thus Jim went on reasoning with himself. That very day he commenced thieving; and that night the officers were in his room, pulling him from his bed and from his crying wife and children. He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to four months' confinement.

With Joseph Anderson matters went on even better than he had expected. He became known as a smart workman, could command good wages, and was frequently engaged for a week beforehand. This enabled him to live more comfortably, and lay up a little. He soon got rid of his taunting companions; for when they saw that he was resolved to go on, and that he succeeded so well, they felt abashed in his presence. His wife felt younger by a dozen years; and a more contented, industrious, and good woman could not be found. She was always contriving some new pleasure for her husband, and he had never to find fault with neglect in the house. She carefully instructed George; and she needed not to be over-watchful, for he was an affectionate boy, and loved his mother too well to give her pain.

CHAPTER IV.

Thus matters went on through the spring time and summer, till early in the fall, when one day Joe had worked hard, and after being quite warm, got quickly chilled. This brought on a cold, which, owing to neglect, increased to a fever. This fever grew worse, till he was obliged at last to remain through the long day in his bed. It was a sore trial, but he sought to be patient; his hands were dry and hot, and his cheeks glowed like a coal. Appearances

became worse. His strength failed him. He who was a man became weak as a little child. He lay day and night helpless.

"How is father?" asked George as he stole down one morning before the sun had crimsoned the sky.

His mother looked at him, and mournfully shook her head. "He has had a sad, sad night, my son; but he may be saved to us yet." And she covered her face with her hand.

George crept to the bedside, but his father's eyes were closed, and he did not speak.

He gazed steadfastly in his father's face, and, save a slight motion of the breast, the form of his father looked like the dead. All was hushed. The stillness was solemn. The ticking of the clock seemed painful. George' pulse beat quick. There lay the father whom he loved, stricken down by disease—the father who had loved him in infancy. He gazed and sighed deeply; and the tears gushed from his eyes. Was he to be an orphan? Was his father to die? He trembled, he knelt down upon the sanded floor, and clasped his hands tightly together.

He had never known such emotions till now. All seemed lonely. Hope and fear struggled in his breast. He loved his father, and must he lose him on the earth—forever? Must he be torn away? Must that hand become cold? and that eye fixed, and that lip wax pale? He could utter no words—and he remained still. His face was raised, and he still prayed. There was a gentle motion that showed that his soul was stirred within him. His prayer was long and fervent. It went up from a pure heart, and it was answered. He arose more calm.

All was quiet as before. He stood and gazed again upon the face of his father—a tranquil smile rested upon it, showing that his mind was at peace; but his sleep was silent and deep.

During the forenoon, George's teacher called and found the feelings of the mother and son more subdued. Every thing looked calm. Neat white curtains shaded the windows, and the half-closed shutter threw a dim twilight over the room. A Bible lay open upon the table; and over the

fireplace hung an engraving of Jesus raising the widow's son. The teacher had brought some cordial, and several days previous had given orders to the physician to attend faithfully to the sick man. He laid what he had brought upon the table, and stood talking in a low voice to the mother.

"The merciful hand of God," said the teacher, "worketh in this thing, and we must bow to his good pleasure."

"Yes, it is a sore trial," said the wife; "but the Lord's will be done."

While they spoke, Joe awoke, and with some exertion lifted himself in the bed. He had been a little delirious; but he was now calm. He moved his hand feebly towards his son who stood by his side, and drew him still nearer. A new light filled his eye, and his lips quivered.

"George, it may be I am passing hence—God alone knoweth. If so be I am called away, take good care of your mother—do for her more than your father has done—be her staff—comfort her in her sorrows."

He closed his eyes, and sank back; but it was only for a moment. He reclined upon his side, and extending once more his hand, laid it upon the head of his son.

"Oh, my son, you have brought to your father the blessing of God. You have turned his feet from the path of folly. You have led him back to his duty. I trust now in the Father of all. I believe in the Gospel of Christ. I rejoice in the hope of salvation. That promise has saved me from ruin. Take, my son, your dying father's blessing. May God prosper you, and his holy angels watch over you. When I pass away to my long home, and sit, as I trust I may, at the feet of my Savior, I will remember you, and my prayer even there shall be for your safety. Heaven bless you;" and he pressed tremulously the hands of his son, and murmured out a farewell. He was much exhausted; but he whispered a few words to his wife who leaned over the bedside, after which she pressed her lips to his, and sat down to weep.

He took a little of the cordial, and from this moment his eyes closed, and he fell into a sweet sleep. He remained in this way through the rest of the day; and this

encouraged the physician, who felt that he would probably wake up somewhat refreshed. The night following would decide his life or death. The morning came slowly on, and the sick man still lived. The next day passed, and he was less feeble; and the day following they all joined in gratitude to God for the great hope of a recovery. From this time he grew better, and they who feared for his life now acknowledged the loving kindness of God in bringing him back from the borders of death. It was many weeks before he was able to go out; and even then he walked with a slow and feeble step, and generally with George at his side. While he was recovering, he used frequently to converse with his wife on the happy effect that this sickness had had upon his mind; he realized more his dependence upon a higher power, his affections were more spiritual, his feelings were more gentle, he felt nearer heaven. "Thus this sickness," said he, "which we thought so grievous, has been to me the greatest of blessings."

CHAPTER V.

One evening George came into the door looking paler than usual. "O dear! have you heard," said he, "about Jim Bayley? He is drowned; he fell from the wharf last night after he had been drinking, and was brought home this morning."

This awakened a train of serious and solemn thought in the minds of all. Poor, miserable man! He had been let out of confinement but a short time before, and now he had closed his eyes in this world, to give his account in another. The day following he was to be buried, and Joe Anderson went in to attend the last services.

When he entered, the wife and children were weeping by the coffin; and one or two of the neighbors had stepped

in. All was still, save the sobs of the child, and the heart-rending groans of the wife.

In a moment or two, the aged lecturer who had so pleased Jim while living, stood up. His white hair fell about his brow, and he held out his wrinkled hand.

"It is usual," said he, in a deep, clear voice, "it is usual to pray at such times; but I believe in no God, and I pray to no God. Let the dead be buried."

This was too much for Joe. His heart sickened within him. He had braved perils—he had seen death in a thousand shapes—but he never felt as now. His blood actually chilled, and he sank into a chair and groaned.

The coffin was borne out, and the sable hearse moved slowly down the street. Joe rose up and turned towards home. The next day old Jim Bayley's wife and children were taken to the Alms-House, where they are living to this day.

About a fortnight from this time, was the anniversary of the New Year; and George looked forward to it with a beating heart. One year had nearly passed; it had been a long year; and it had had many pleasures. He had studied well at school, had gained the affection of his teachers. He had added to the pleasure of his parents' fireside, and had done several little deeds of charity to the poor neighbors, which made him loved by all. One day his teacher had accidentally seen him carrying a pail of water for an old woman; and it was told by an aged person who had lost his sight, that George had frequently been in, and read the Bible to him. These were only little things, it is true; but they showed the bent of George's mind, and they helped to make him happy. The last night of December he went up to the same little room that he went to a year before; but with what different feelings! Then, he was perplexed—now, he was happy. Then, he prayed God to save them from evil—now, he thanked God for having so blessed them. He thought over the events of the year, and traced in them all the workings of a kind Providence. That night he had sweet dreams.

In the morning he again crept down stairs, to surprise his parents, by wishing them first, "a happy new year."

ow different was it all! His mother's face gleamed delight, and his father was indeed *a man*. His eye shone with joy, and he gladly wished his son a happy year in return. What a change had been brought about! That house, so full of trouble, was now the place of light.

The whole day passed pleasantly. They talked over the year's blessings, and that evening, while they were all gathered happily by the fire, in came the teacher to wish them a happy new year. He had called on all his class, and he now felt that he could pass the rest of the evening with them. He had known of the reform in Joe Anderson's character; he had noticed the alterations in the house; but he had never known how it was all brought about. In the evening Joe Anderson related the whole; and with a smile in his eyes expressed his affection for his son, and his resolution not only to abstain from drinking himself, but to urge others to do so too, and moreover to do what he could to make all feel the beauty of holiness, and the joy of serving the Lord.

While he expressed this, he drew George to his side and told him that that promise should be another token of his love, not only for a year, but for his whole life.